

Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission Report

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The Gift of Fishing

For me, the holidays have always been about family and fishing.

The family part is obvious, as we gather with friends (many of whom are like family) and relatives to celebrate Thanksgiving, religious holidays, and the ringing in of the new year.

The fishing part may not be readily apparent to you, but it is for me. As a kid, I always hoped for a fishing-related gift under the Christmas tree. As an adult, I think about how I could make a new rod, reel or other piece of tackle the perfect gift for someone.

Even deer hunting – which is a big part of many of our holiday seasons – means fishing to me. From the time I started spending the first Monday after Thanksgiving with a rifle in my hands, my thoughts while on watch or sneaking through Penn's Woods have always strayed to fishing, and how I could not wait to start ice fishing.

As you think about a memorable gift for that special someone on your list, I have two suggestions for you. In this same column last year, I announced the availability of multi-year fishing licenses. I am happy to report that multi-year licenses have been a resounding success. To date, we have sold over 32,000 three- and five-year licenses. Multi-year licenses offer convenience and cost-savings.

When you have a multi-year license, you do not need to worry about picking up a license at the last minute if your busy schedule prevented you from buying one before an unplanned fishing trip. And it is

also cheaper than waiting to buy a new license every year. If you are like most anglers who also buy a trout/salmon, Lake Erie, or combo permit, you save \$6.80 for the three-year license and \$13.60 for the five-year license.

Instead of (or in addition to if the person on your list has been very good) a new piece of fishing tackle, consider giving someone a gift voucher that they can redeem for an annual or multi-year fishing license. You will be giving the person a great gift that they can use throughout the year and possibly for years to follow. Fishing license gift vouchers may be purchased on-line at the Outdoor Shop (www.GoneFishingPa.com) or at more than 900 issuing agents.

And don't just think of this as a gift idea for the experienced angler on your list. One of the best things we can all do for the sport of fishing is to introduce it to someone who has never fished or who has maybe let their rod collect dust for a few years. By giving that person a gift voucher for an annual or multi-year fishing license, they will no longer have an excuse to turn you down the next time you ask them to join you on the water.

While gift vouchers may be the perfect item for friends and family 16 and over, the best thing you can give to children throughout the year



At Lions Lake, Lebanon, PA, one of 12 designated waters in southeast Pennsylvania, the faces of both Jeremy Moyer and his niece Briana Moyer show the resulting joy of catching trout and fishing together.

Photo: Ted Walke, PFBC

is your time.

On March 23, 2013, we made history by giving adults a unique opportunity – and more time – to take a child fishing during the inaugural Mentored Youth Trout Fishing Day. This event provided registered youth and licensed mentors an opportunity to get an early start on trout season. It was a pilot program held on 12 waters in the regional opening day zone, covering 18 southeastern Pennsylvania counties. This special day was made possible by temporary changes in regulations, and it permitted registered youth and licensed mentors an opportunity to creel two trout, one week earlier than the regional opening day for trout.

We piloted the Mentored Youth Trout Day as part of our bigger goal to keep young anglers and their families fishing. The pilot program gave us the chance to gauge interest and to determine the feasibility of expanding the program across the state. When March 23 came to an end, 5,110 youth were registered by 3,766 mentors. Angler counts were conducted at three-hour intervals, and more than 4,800 anglers were counted over the course of the day.

Despite temperatures in the upper 30's most of the day, participants provided our staff with plenty of positive feedback. The smiles in the photos of mentors and youth



Lions Lake Photo: Ted Walke, PFBC

with their catches provided further proof.

We observed many three-generation groups, with one grandpa proudly proclaiming that he was mentoring both of "his boys" and went on to say that "you are never too old to be a mentor or the apprentice," taking a jab at his son who doesn't fish often.

In addition, many single-parent households were seen fishing on this special day with mom and daughter proudly displaying their family's catches of the day.

Based upon this year's successful experiences, I am happy to report that our Board of Commissioners voted unanimously in October to accept staff's recommendation to expand the program to the rest of the Commonwealth for 2014.

We are currently evaluating which waters will host the events in 2014 and will be an-



As proudly shown by Nathan Housel at Children's Lake, Boiling Springs, PA, there were some trophy-sized trout lurking in the waters during this special day.

Photo: Dave Miko, PFBC

nouncing those waters soon through the Commission's website (www.fishandboat.com).

So you will be able to give the gift of fishing twice after reading this article. Once by buying someone over 16 years of age a multi-year fishing license, and a second time by enrolling a child to participate on Mentored Youth Trout Day. They will both be gifts that keep on giving.

Fish and Wildlife Programs on the Chopping Block

Over the past year, there have been a number of proposals that would drastically cut funding for programs that are important to hunters and anglers.

In fact, recent legislation debated in the House of Representatives would have completely eliminated funding for some of our flagship conservation initiatives like the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Join us in letting Congress know that we won't stand for these extreme cuts.

The many partners in the conservation community have been able to hold the line and play a

prominent role in preventing the worst proposed cuts to vital conservation programs, which support jobs and healthy local economies across America.

But with Congress currently ramping up for another budget battle, we need your support to uphold our hunting and fishing heritage and the outdoor recreation economy. Contact your US Senator and Representative and let them know that Sportsmen Support Strong Conservation Funding!

Sample Letter/Talking Points

As our country continues the difficult process of addressing our un-

sustainable deficits, I understand that everyone must share the burden. But the FY 2014 Interior and Environment Related Agencies appropriations bill recently debated by the U.S. House of Representatives attempts to place a disproportionate burden on programs that sportsmen support.

As a sportsman and conservationist, I believe this approach to deficit reduction is misguided.

As Congress works to reduce the deficit, I urge you to find a sustainable path forward that addresses the root causes of our deficit rather than attempting to balance the budget on the backs of these important programs.